

Congresswoman Moore released the following House floor statement in favor of measures to strengthen the enforcement of equal pay rights.

Madam Speaker, in 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was signed into law to grant the right to equal pay to women who worked full-time, year-round, women made 59 cents on average for every dollar earned by men doing the same level of work. In 2006, women earned 77 cents for every dollar earned by men. While that is progress, it is slow progress and it means that the wage gap between men and women has narrowed by less than half a cent per year since passage of that law. At the same time, African American women today earn only 63 cents and Hispanic women bring home just 52 cents for each dollar earned by men.

In my state of Wisconsin, women with a college degree still make considerably less than men with the same amount of education. With rising gas prices, higher health insurance, and a disproportionate amount of single-family homes headed by women, it is of the utmost importance that workers receive fair and equal pay for equal work. This is not just a civil rights issue: it's a survival issue for women workers providing for their family's food, rent, and heat.

But a right to equal pay is no right at all unless it can be enforced.

Madam Speaker, I am a proud co-sponsor of H.R. 1338, the Paycheck Fairness Act, which would strengthen the Equal Pay Act of 1963 by providing more effective remedies to women who are not being paid equal wages for doing equal work. For example women would be able to seek full compensatory and punitive damages because the bill would put gender-based discrimination on an equal footing with wage discrimination based on race or ethnicity for which full compensation is already available. The bill would also prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who share salary information with their co-workers, require the Department of Labor to enhance outreach and training efforts to work with employers to eliminate pay disparities, and create a new grant program to help strengthen the negotiation skills of girls and women.

This week, in honor of Equal Pay Day, the Senate plans to consider another bill, H.R. 2831, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which is necessary to ensure that victims of workforce discrimination can seek effective remedies. A recent Supreme Court decision last spring made it extremely difficult for workers who suffer from workplace wage discrimination to seek justice in

court. Instead of allowing workers who suffer wage discrimination to bring a case within 180 days of the last time they were illegally underpaid, the Supreme Court decision would require that the case be brought within 180 days of the first time that an employer first started to discriminate by paying lower wages.

This decision overturned precedent and made it much more difficult for workers to pursue pay discrimination claims. H.R. 2831 would simply restore the longstanding interpretation of Title VII and other discrimination statutes, thereby protecting women and other workers.

Madam Speaker, equal work deserves equal pay, no matter your gender, skin color, national origin, age or disability. That's the law of the land. But we need to make sure that we have the measures in place to ensure that these rights can be strongly enforced.

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